THE
ABC'S
OF HACKING
ETHNOGRAPHY

Tips on how to conduct ethnographic research and handle digital data throughout your research

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Introduction

As Anthropologists, there are a lot of fundamentals to remember when writing. Nowadays a lot of our research and results are stored online, whether that is notes, publications or specific aspects that are confidential. In order to protect all these, there are a few rules to keep in mind. In this guide, we have identified four categories: **definitions**, **things to remember**, **explanations**, and **general language used in ethnographic research**. Using all the letters of the alphabet, this guide will give you an easy-to-remember overview to fall back on when you need a source, an explanation, or just a reminder. So remembering the rules will be as easy as remembering the alphabet.

Disclaimer: Unless otherwise cited, these are our interpretations of the concepts.

ANONYMOUS

It is important to anonymise your data so that no participants can be recognised or identified. This is especially important when dealing with sensitive information, in order to protect their privacy.

(INTERNET) BROWSING

With more research being conducted in online formats and data being stored through digital methods, it is important to know how to browse safely and securely. Internet browsing can increasingly result in issues with your device, hacking, or loss of data. It is important to avoid suspicious websites, advertisements and emails. Be sceptical of downloads and attachments. You can regularly clear your cache to avoid unwanted tracking. Additionally, browsing incognito, through a VPN for example, can also provide extra security. Furthermore, it is important to only connect to trusted WIFI's.
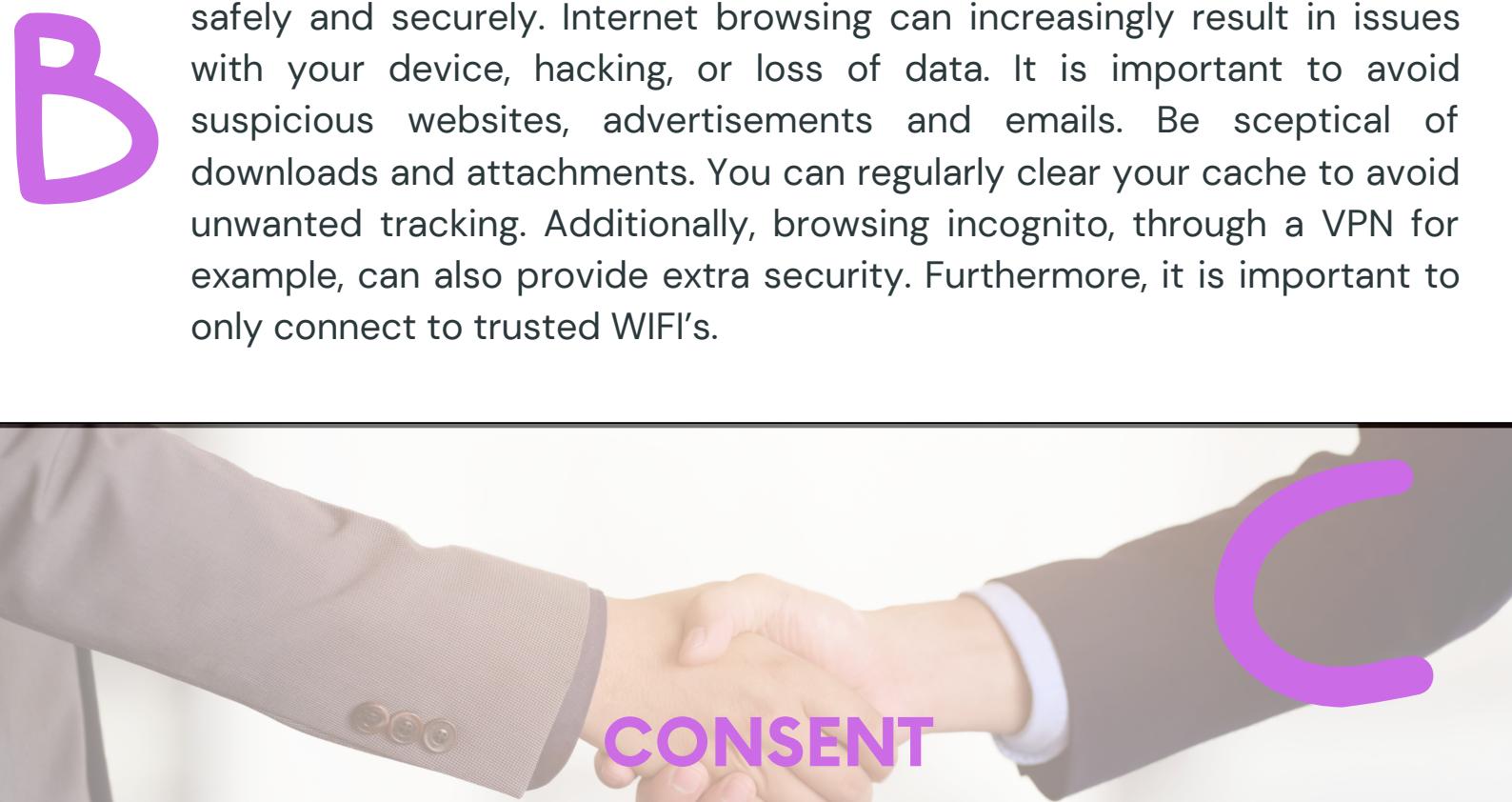
CONSENT

It is vital to request consent before engaging in any form of research. Additionally, this consent should continuously be requested throughout the duration of the research. Participants should know the terms and conditions to which they are consenting to.

DIGITAL DATA

Data that is stored online and accessible via a digital device. Examples could be digital fieldnotes, but also websites, online articles and publications.

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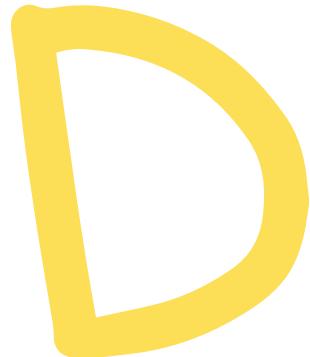
ETHNOGRAPHY

A descriptive piece of work that describes what has been observed or experienced, either through writing, drawing, or any other form of capturing data.

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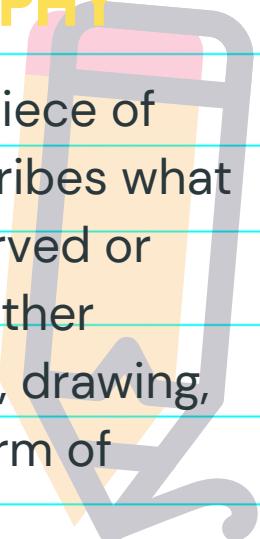
FIELDNOTES

Notes taken in the field while, or after, conducting participant observation on a research population or subject.

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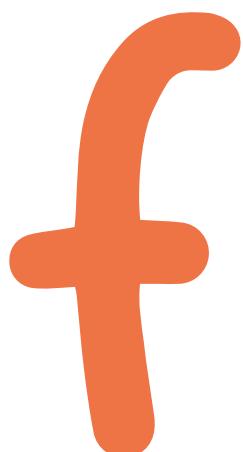
GOVERNMENT

Sometimes, **g**overnments can surveil people online, and it might be safer for you to hide yourself and your potentially sensitive research data, A.K.A. alien ethnography (Thomas-Hébert 2019).

HACKING

Hacking refers to the process of breaking the security on a system, sometimes legally or illegally, and hackers can be classified into three categories based on their motivations; white hat, grey hat, and black hat hackers.

INTERNET

Merriam-Webster (s.a.) defines the **i**nternet as: "an electronic communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world", which has created many new field work opportunities in online communities.
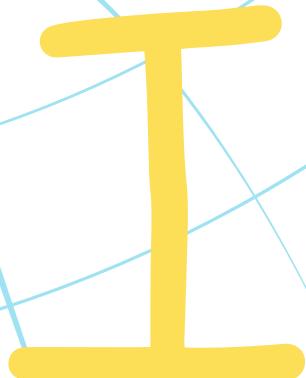
J Journal

During ethnographic research, you can encounter two different kinds of journals.
First, a journal as a personal diary to write down your experience. Second, a journal as a professional magazine for which you can write an article about your research.
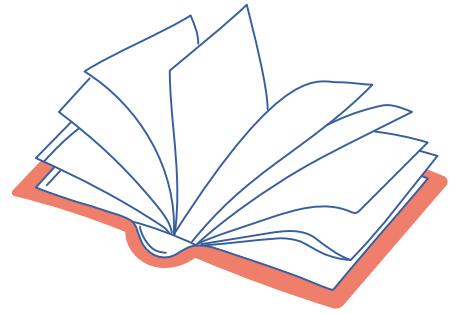
Knowledge

Make sure you have the right knowledge when conducting your research. Use different kinds of knowledge, e.g. background or literature-based knowledge.

L Literature

Support your research by finding valid literature. Look for literature that is peer-reviewed and comes from a trustworthy source.
Look, for example, at your university's online library.

METHODOLOGY

How has a research project been executed? What are the methods used? And how did theseused methods influence the overall results of the reseach done?
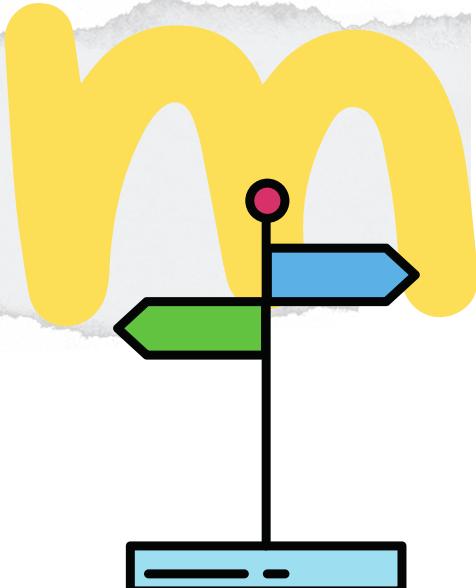
KNOW

There are certain rules that anthropologists are expected to follow in regard to ethics. These rules are all documented in the code of ethics of your anthropological institution, such as AAA, ASA, etc. Make sure you look at it!!
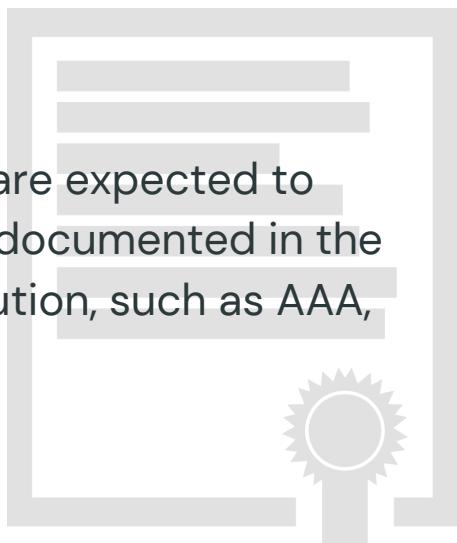
(MEETING) ONLINE

Because of Covid, interviews, meetings and fieldwork have mainly been online this past year. This has its benefits, as it creates a lot of flexibility and connections. However, as it is online it also comes with some risks. confidential information can not be told face to face anymore but has an online, and digital, wall inbetween. this makes it less secure. so whenever you meet online make sure that you take precautions, maybe even one named in this zine.
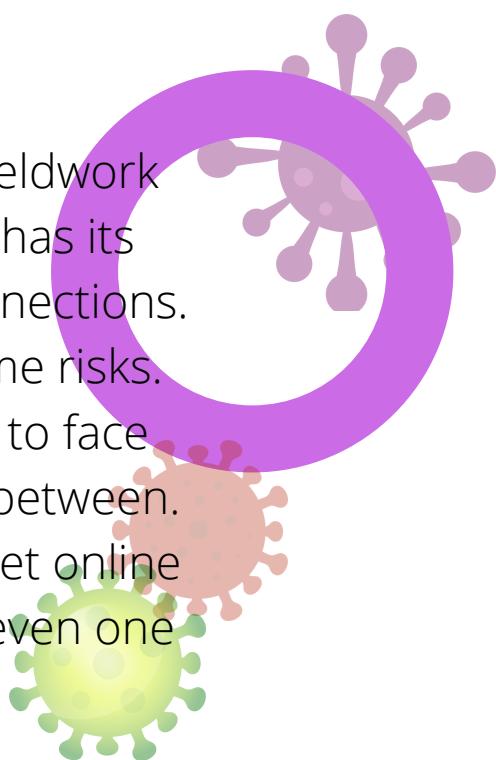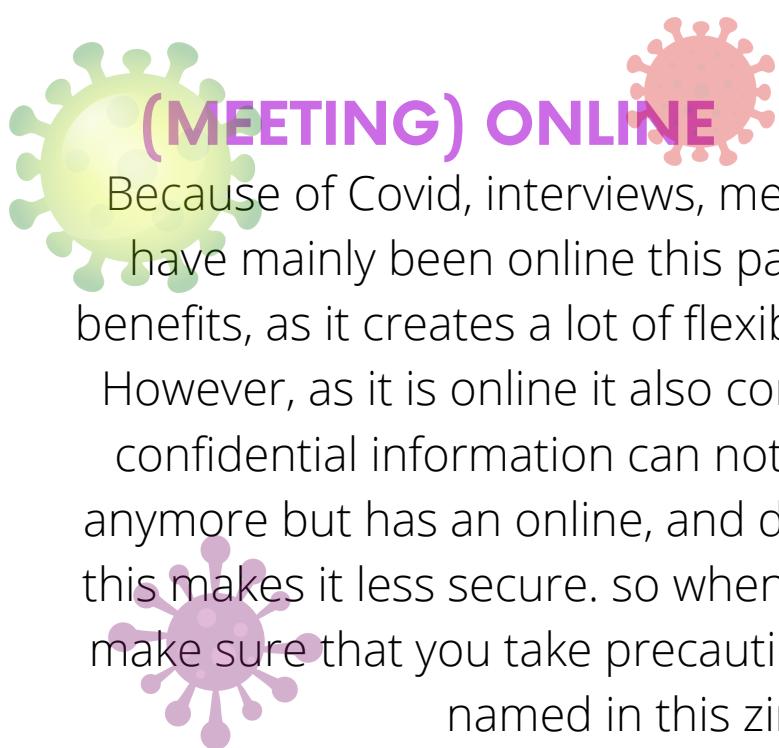
PRIVACY

The right to have control over your own personal data. Remember to respect the privacy of others.

QUESTIONS

Questions posed throughout the research and interviews should be critical but respectful. Consent should be obtained for the collection of this information, and privacy and confidentiality should be ensured.

RIGHTS

Remember the research participants have the right to their data and to the knowledge for its purpose or use.
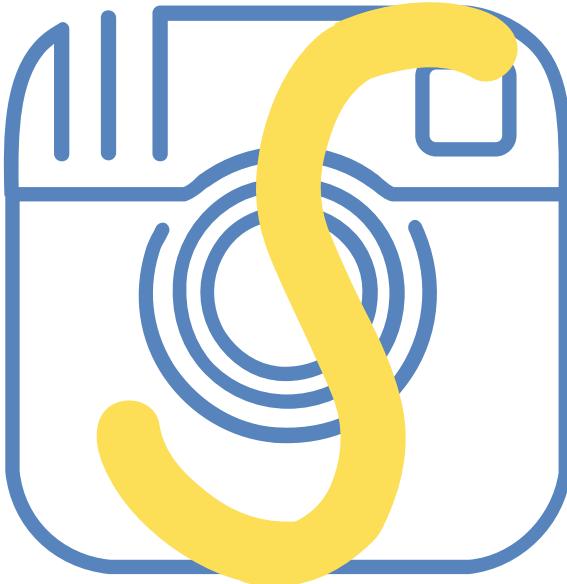
SOCIAL MEDIA

Reminder: **s**ocial media platforms are public and often have security issues, so double–check that you have gained consent before posting, for the safety of everyone involved.

TRANSCRIPT

Transcripts refer to the written product that anthropologists record in the field, either on paper or online.

UNDERESTIMATE

NEVER **U**NDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL SECURITY (i.e. passwords, VPNs, etc.).

VPN

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) protects your data by preventing the eavesdropping of unauthorized people. It is advisable to use a VPN when handling sensitive data. You may be able to use a VPN through your university. There are also several good (paid) VPN's online, e.g. ExpressVPN or NordVPN.
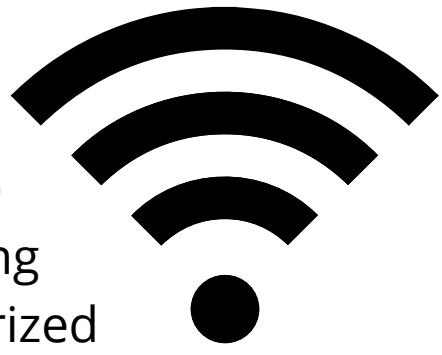
WWW

You may want to make a website when doing your research. There exist several good website-making websites, e.g. Squarespace, WordPress, or One.com. These website-makers are very user-friendly, but there are many more website-makers that you can find online.
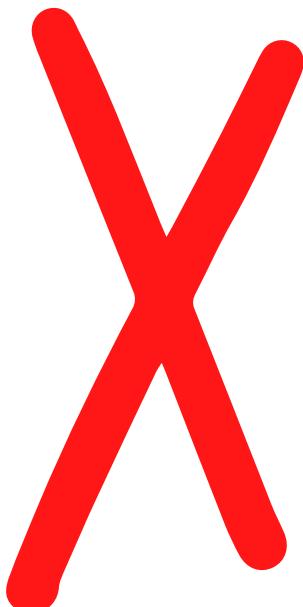
Don't

- Use Google too much
- Use sources without giving credit
- Use Wikipedia as a source

fetched the day before. Mr. Langham climbed up it and gave a cry of disgust.

"You haven't cleaned the shelf at all! But here is the payment I left for you to find. I thought your mother would love to share it with you."

He brought down a large box of chocolates—but he didn't give them to Tom. Tom felt so ashamed of himself that he couldn't even *look* at the old man.

"And now for the last payments," said Mr. Langham. "Come along. Di[d] [you put] straw into the nesting-boxes [?]"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"But I suppose you were too lazy to pull out the old straw first?" said Mr. Langham.

"Yes, sir," said T[om], in a very low v[oi]ce indeed[.]

Mr. Langham [ ] He pulled out both the new and old straw from the first box—and the[re] [ ] He did the same with the last [ne]—and there were three new pennies, round and shining. Mr. Langham picked th[em]nd put them into his own pocket.

"You can go," he said to Tom. "I will tell the Scoutmaster why I gave you no payment. Boys like you shouldn't be Cubs and promise to do a good deed every day. Look at the bad ones you did

yesterday! You shouldn't be allowed to be in the Cubs. You had better resign at once."

Tom was horrified. What would the Scout-master say? What would his mother say? And the boys? He caught hold of Mr. Langham's arm.

"Sir, listen! I like being a Cub. It's fun. I'm sorry about those jobs. Please, please, sir, give me some more jobs to do and I'll do them well without any payment at all—and I'll take a shil-ling out of my own money-box to pay into the [ ] Fu[nd]."

[ ] to believe a deceitful boy like you?" said Mr. Langham.

"I don't know. But please do, sir," begged Tom.

"I tell you, I *want* to be a Cub. I can't bear to be turned out."

[ ]—do you want to be a *good* Cub—and later on a first-class Scout?" said M[ ] [Tha]t's what matters."

[Yes, I w]ill, if you'll give me a chance," said Tom. "I couldn't bear anyone to hear about this—and how I didn't find any of the payments. Think of some more jobs for me, sir —hard ones, long ones. I'll soon show you!"

Well, Mr. Langham *did* think of some—and they *were* hard and long ones—with no payment at all.

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Remember to cite sources and give credit where it is due.

ZINE

A **z**ine is a small magazine–style publication that can be used for all kinds of subject matter; in this case, the ABC's of Hacking Ethnography.

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